

Don't Feel Bad by emmablownguns

Series: [The Impolite Verse \[3\]](#)

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Summary:

The gang has to get summer jobs.

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Author's Note:

this is just a short little fan fic i had in my brain with little to no plot and honestly maybe not worth your time but here it is

After junior year, the reality of college began to set in, fast. Jonathan knew he was planning on college, just like Nancy, but Steve wasn't so sure what his post graduation plans were just yet. Whatever they *did* decide to do after graduation, whether it be school or leaving Hawkins altogether, they could all agree that they would need money, and lots of it. As such, they'd all scoured the help wanted ads, looking for anything to take up their time and fill their wallets with cash.

Steve and Nancy had been excited when the public pool announced they had spots open, but Jonathan couldn't quite share their excitement in that. He had almost no tolerance for the heat, and before he worked he spent most of his summers inside trying to pretend the sun didn't exist. Working at a swimming pool in July was simply not an option for him, so he kept looking while Steve filled out applications and Nancy got certified in CPR.

Luckily for him, a couple stores in the mall had openings, which was how he'd gotten shackled to a dull job at a mall kiosk selling cheap toys to exhausted parents. It wasn't the most exciting job, but he got to sit in a chair for most of the day, and it wasn't outside. That was really all he could ask for. Another perk of the job was that he got off work earlier than Steve and Nancy, so he was able to visit them on the job. Though he supposed he was really visiting more with Steve, as Nancy took her job as a lifeguard very seriously, blowing her whistle at children who were running and keeping a close eye on anyone who might need saving. Steve, on the other hand, ran the snack bar with a careless ease. He worked less as though he'd applied and interviewed for the job and more like he'd casually stumbled into the place and no one had thought to stop him. He joked with parents as he poured syrup over snowcones, he whistled while he rung up customers.

Jonathan was just lucky that they never had to see him work, because it wasn't anything to get excited about. He'd ring up customers quickly, trying to get by with little to no interaction, and when he wasn't pedaling useless toys, he was daydreaming about Steve and Nancy. The summer and the new job had been very kind to them, Nancy had perpetual beach waves from the wind whipping her hair, and both of them were sporting a healthy looking tan. They were practically glowing, and the job didn't seem to be wearing on them at all. At the end of the day, they'd regale Jonathan with countless stories of the various patrons of this particular pool, babbling excitedly about things both of them had noticed while on the job.

Jonathan could not say the same of him. Staying inside all day didn't exactly give you a killer tan, and most of the days he was just trying to tune out the hustle and bustle that was a crowded mall in the summertime. Even though he hadn't had much luck with getting an exciting job, he wasn't too broken up about it. Jonathan could tell that Steve and Nancy were really enjoying themselves, and it was their excitement that kept him from losing his mind on the particularly taxing days. Things were lax enough at the pool that they'd allow Jonathan to hang out with Steve behind the counter and take shelter from the blistering sun. These times were the best, it even made up for all of the hassle at work. Steve had gotten pretty good at maintaining a snack bar, and Jonathan often found himself mesmerized by the process. When he wasn't chatting with Steve, he was openly admiring Nancy up on her lifeguard's perch. Steve would usually take notice of this and shoot a sly grin at Jonathan before he'd give her a small wave, occasionally she'd even push up her sunglasses to blow them both a kiss.

"God, how does she do it?" Jonathan said one afternoon, looking up at Nancy and using his arm to shield him from the sun.

Steve looked him up and down, eyebrows raised curiously, "Do what?"

"Work in the sun all day." Jonathan crossed his arms and leaned against the wall, "How do *you* work in the sun all day?"

"Well, we don't burn as easily as you do, for one." He chuckled,

turning his back away to fiddle with the soda machine, “Also, I’m pretty sure Nancy is superhuman.” Steve turned back to face him, wiping some sweat from his brow with the back of his palm.

“I think you’re right.” Jonathan replied, glancing back at Nancy, who was climbing down from her seat and heading their way. “She’s definitely superhuman.”

“Hey guys,” She greeted them with a warm smile, pushing up her sunglasses to look them both in the eye.

“Hello there,” Steve nearly purred back, resting his elbows on the counter and his head in his hands.

Jonathan felt his heartbeat pick up and jammed his hands into his pocket to keep them from shaking. He wasn’t usually so nervous around them, but something about how they looked at work drove Jonathan mad. Nancy’s legs seemed to go on forever, her swimsuit leaving little the imagination, and Steve never seemed to stop smiling when he was working, it was almost too much for Jonathan to handle sometimes.

“How was your day, Jonathan?” Nancy’s voice startled him, and it must have been obvious by how they both chuckled at his reaction.

“You there, Byers?” Steve teased, poking him in the shoulder playfully, “She scare you?”

“Oh, my day was fine.” Jonathan shook his head, shooting both of them a reassuring smile.

It was about time for both of them to get off work, Steve was just tidying up a few things before the next guy took over for him.

“So, are you done for the day, or...?” He trailed off, extending his hand in Nancy’s direction.

“Yeah, I’m totally done.” She replied. “I just gotta go change and then I’ll head back here, okay?”

“Sounds good to me.” Steve turned to look at Jonathan, “What do you think, Byers? Can we pry you away from the sun?”

Jonathan scoffed and rolled his eyes. Nancy beamed at both of them before heading off towards the changing rooms.

After Nancy had changed and Steve had finished everything he needed to do, they all got into Jonathan's car and headed to Steve's house, from there they'd either do something fun or just lay in his bed and watch movies. It had become their weekday routine, and it wasn't even a question anymore as to whether or not they wanted to hang out, it was just a question of where.

Today, they were all feeling a bit worn out from the long week, and when they pulled up into the driveway they all wordlessly shuffled into the house like zombies, no question about their plans for this evening.

To no one's surprise, Steve's house was empty, so they decided to crash on the couch instead of attempting to haul themselves up the stairs. Steve flopped right in the middle of the couch, smiling up at Nancy and Jonathan invitingly. Jonathan sat to the left of him, shivering just slightly when Steve wrapped his arm around him and pulled him close. Nancy grabbed the blanket that was folded over the back of the couch and pulled it over them before snuggling into Steve's other side. She sighed and closed her eyes as an easy silence fell over them.

It was particularly risky to cuddle out in the open like this, but Steve had assured them that his parents were gone for the weekend and there was no chance of being caught. The warmth of the blanket combined with the warmth of their bodies seemed to lull Jonathan to somewhere between being awake and being asleep. For just this short time, he had no worries or doubt, he just let his eyes close, drifting.

"I like this," Steve said, breaking the silence and tugging on Jonathan's collar.

"What?" He replied, sitting up with a start and blearily rubbing his eyes.

"I like the uniform they make you wear for your job. It's cute."

"Yeah, I like it too." Nancy chimed in, her head having slipped to rest

on Steve's lap at some point.

"Really?" Jonathan blushed at the compliment, looking down at his feet and shaking his head. "I thought it was kind of lame. You guys look way better."

"No way!" Nancy gasped, sitting up to look at him, "What makes you say that?"

The topic was a sore subject for him, and it was something he'd been stewing on since they had all gotten their jobs this summer.

"You guys are like models, " Jonathan said, looking over at them, "And I'm just..." He shrugged, unable to accurately explain the millions of little differences between him and them.

"You're just *what*? " Steve said, resting his head on Jonathan's and nuzzling him softly.

"Nothing, it's totally dumb." He replied stubbornly.

"Jonathan..." Nancy made a sympathetic noise from the back of her throat and reached for his hand. He took it easily, and felt her give a light squeeze in return. She always seemed to understand exactly what was on his mind without ever saying a word.

"Come on." Steve said, his voice soft and pleading, "You're not *just* anything to us." It was the classic line he liked to dish out whenever Jonathan was feeling insecure about something, but it wasn't much help now.

"Yeah, I *know*," Jonathan rolled his eyes, "I've just been working inside all summer, I'm all pale and gross and... you guys are all..." He gestured at them to emphasize his point.

"Well you don't tan anyway, you burn." Nancy pointed out.

"Believe me, I know that too." He quipped back.

"Then what's the problem?" Steve asked patiently, brushing some of the hair out of Jonathan's eyes.

“ *Nothing* .” Jonathan sighed and buried his head into Steve’s side. “Just forget about it.” Why wasn’t it obvious to them? Couldn’t they see it too? He wasn’t on the same level as them, never had been. This new job thing was just a physical manifestation of that, a sure sign that maybe what they were doing wasn’t right, and he’d always be that creepy third wheel between them. Jonathan was still getting used to this “relationship” thing. It was still foreign for someone other than his family to love him unconditionally, let alone two people at that.

What made it all worse was how *nice* they were about it. He knew he was being difficult, but even still they never snapped at him, never wavered in their affection.

Nancy sighed and sat up, releasing Jonathan's hand and combing her fingers through her hair.

“Well, whatever it is,” She climbed off the couch, moving to sit next to Jonathan, “We *love* you, okay? Tan or no tan.” Nancy chuckled and cupped his cheek with her hand. That made him smile a little bit, and Jonathan felt instantly guilty that he'd ever doubted them.

“Also, you’re not gross.” Steve added, patting his thigh comfortingly, “Quite the opposite, actually.”

“You’re not gross either.” Jonathan replied, turning to grin back at Steve.

“Wow, that’s the nicest thing you’ve ever said to me, Byers.”

They all burst out in a fit of giggles, and it was clear that any storm clouds between them had passed. Nancy and Steve both repositioned their snuggling pile to accommodate Jonathan in the middle, each of them curling into his side with a sigh.

“Hey,” Nancy said softly, her voice vibrating against him, “Are you good? Is this okay?”

To Jonathan, the best part about all of their jobs wasn’t the pay, it was how cuddly they were when they had free time, how grateful they were to just relax and enjoy each other’s company. He’d always

questioned if absence really did make the heart grow fonder, but he could see now that it was more than the case with these two. He'd originally been worried that working away from them would've made him the odd man out, but that was hardly the case. If anything, they'd gotten closer as a result of it.

"Yeah, it's great." Jonathan said, and this time he meant it.